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THE FUNCTIONS OF SPANISH IN THE SCHOOL LIVES OF
MEXICANO BILINGUAL CHILDREN¹

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Abstract

This qualitative study was concerned with examining the first language of young Mexicano bilinguals who had already learned enough English to work in all-English classrooms. In order to capture natural language usage within the school setting, five focal children were chosen, observed and audiotaped throughout their school day, for a period of roughly four months. This research presents data on the functions that Spanish continued to serve in the lives of these developing bilinguals. Additionally, it describes the competence they showed in their Spanish. Throughout their school day, in different roles, and in distinct contexts, the children used Spanish in varied and complex ways: (a) to provide information and assistance with school work; (b) to seek explanations, information and clarification; (c) to provide their own self-talk which helped them think through problems, plan strategies and assess their own work; d) to establish and maintain a variety of social relationships, juggling changes in friendships and group tensions; (e) to integrate their out-of-school worlds into their school world through narrative, commentary, play and imagination; and (f) to negotiate and maintain participation in on-going conversations. These descriptions and analyses of naturally-occurring Spanish language interactions have contributed to a more detailed picture of the young bilingual's first language in contact situations.

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Introduction

Language minority children are under significant pressure to learn English. In the majority of schools with bilingual programs, the emphasis is on moving children to an English-speaking program as quickly as possible. These programs require a yearly or bi-yearly assessment of the children's progress in English, through standardized tests and other English language proficiency instruments, such as the Language Assessment Scales, the Bilingual Syntax Measure or the Basic Inventory of Natural Language (Ovando & Collier, 1985). In initial testing, English and the native language are usually both assessed, particularly in the case of Spanish. Most subsequent testing, however, is done for only English. As a consequence, little information is available on what happens to the native language as English is acquired. In the few cases where testing is done in Spanish, the information is limited by the narrow scope of the language tests and by the lack of information over time.

Much of the research that exists on bilingual children focuses on their second language acquisition (Ellis, 1984; Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Fillmore, 1976, 1982; Hakuta, 1978; Hatch, 1978). Grosjean (1985) has called for further study that will help us understand if and how the first language is affected by the second. With the exception of code-switching, much of the work that has looked at the native language has been based on elicited language samples (Genishi, 1981; McClure, 1981; Zentella, 1988). Rodriguez-Brown and Elias-Olivares (1983) have documented one of the few studies of children's first and second language use based on natural samples. In their conclusion, they argued that future work should focus on analyzing form and function of bilingual children's languages in both formal and informal settings.

This study was concerned with looking at the functions that Spanish served in the lives of Mexican immigrant children once they had learned English well enough to function in an all-English environment. The secondary question involved looking at those factors that may have influenced qualitative or quantitative differences in the Spanish of individual children. For this reason, both linguistic and historical information was gathered on the school, the community and the

children's families. The focus in this article will be on the ways in which Spanish was used by the children in school.

Methodology

Several theoretical assumptions guided this study. First, the nature of bilingualism must be understood as a function of its use in everyday lives and not as an infrequently realized ideal (Grosjean, 1985; Hymes, 1972; Mackey, 1972b). Second, individual patterns of language use are often reflective of the ways in which language is used in a community and in the families of that community (Fishman, 1968, 1972; Schieffelin & Eisenberg, 1984; Weinreich, 1974). Third, talk must be viewed as an interactive social act which both communicates a linguistic message and helps to constitute particular speech events (Grice, 1975; Hymes, 1972; Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974; Searle, 1975). Fourth, human relations and organizations are reflexive and multidimensional (Erickson, 1982; Mehan, 1982). This means that children, while they are no doubt influenced by adults, also structure and modify their own environment.

The study took place in an elementary school located in a Hispanic community in Albuquerque, New Mexico which has been affected by Mexicano migration for a good part of this century. Its bilingual program is limited to the teaching of Spanish for one hour per week by a Spanish resource teacher. Many of the classroom teachers are Chicanos who generally use Spanish only with those children who have not yet learned English.

The focal classroom was chosen after observations throughout the school revealed that there was a significant amount of Spanish spoken by the children in that class. This was a fifth grade team, where two teachers worked together sharing responsibilities for both of their classrooms. The teachers spoke only Spanish with the monolingual Spanish speakers. However, they allowed the children to speak Spanish with one another in private conversations. Within this team, a group of five Mexicano children, all of whom were fluent in English and who were all friends, were chosen as the subjects for this study. The focal students were children of Mexican national parents who were settled migrants. Settled migrants here refers to Mexicano immigrants who have

lived in the United States continuously for three years or more (Massey et al., 1987). It should not be confused with migratory agricultural worker. Three of the children had been born in the United States, one had come to the United States as an infant and the other had migrated at age five. Only one of them had been in a full bilingual program for the first two years of school.

The children were observed for a period of four months, roughly three days a week. In addition, each observation day, a focal child was audiotaped for the entirety of the observation. These tapes were listened to several times in order to determine under what specific circumstances each child typically spoke Spanish. Later, those tapes that were most representative of the use of Spanish for each child were transcribed.

In order to be able to understand the purposes or functions which Spanish continued to serve in these children's lives, it was necessary to find a unit of analysis that would contribute to a description of the characteristics of Spanish language usage. Most of the audio tapes and transcriptions consisted of conversation between several of the focal children and other classmates. For this reason, an analytical framework was needed which would assist in developing descriptors of what the children could accomplish in Spanish and for what purposes, in conversation. The study of speech as action (Dore, 1977; Edmonson, 1981; Garvey, 1984; Labov & Fanshel, 1977; Searle, 1975; Wells, 1981) provided a way in which to describe what the children could do in Spanish.

Labov and Fanshell's (1977) system was helpful in understanding basic speech acts and their internal relationships. However, it did not lend itself to the analysis of conversations among several peers of equal status, nor to the particulars of children's conversations in school-based contexts. There were, for example, a great many disagreements in the children's transcriptions, which were much more aggressive than most adult conversations usually are. Other remarks were reflective of children's status and roles within the school setting, e.g., warning others of a teacher's presence, etc.

For these reasons, the work of Dore (1977), Brenneis and Lein (1977) and Barnes and Todd (1977) were examined. Each of these studies looked at children's conversation in different contexts. Brenneis and Lein (1977) explored the structure and strategies of American

children's arguments through the use of speech acts. Barnes and Todd (1977) prepared school-based tasks for young adolescents. They developed a system for analyzing the interplay between speech acts and the cognitive strategies the teenagers used in their discussion of the academic tasks. Of particular interest to this study was the focus on intrapersonal speech as it related to academic work. Dore (1977) observed nursery school-aged children at play in their school. He was concerned with the pragmatic meaning, "the intentions of speakers, the relations of utterances to contexts and conversational skills" present in nursery school-aged children (p.142). In this analysis therefore, while the grammatical form was considered in the coding, Dore found that the "grammar did not convey illocutionary intent" (p.143).

Some of the speech acts identified in this study are based on the work of those authors mentioned above. However, others emerged during the analysis of the data. As in Dore's work, grammatical form was not the primary mode of analysis. There were several reasons for this: (1) While some studies of speech acts in Spanish have used grammatical form as part of their analysis, there is as yet little study in this area as it relates to children (Rodriguez-Brown & Elias-Olivares, 1983; Valde's, 1981); (2) Dore himself who has worked with children's language, "argues that it is pointless to describe the utterances of young children in purely grammatical terms; the most important fact about such utterances is that the children are using them to do things" (in Coulthard, 1977, p.156); and (3) in the case of children, speech is to a great extent a social tool, necessitating an analysis which recognizes its function over its form (Bruner, 1983; Halliday, 1973).

The speech acts outlined below are meant, then, to describe what the children actually did in Spanish in natural conversations between peers. In part, this description verifies some of those speech acts which were previously developed under elicitation (Barnes & Todd, 1977; Brenneis & Lein, 1977). After the speech acts were identified, they were grouped into clusters which were then categorized as functions, following to a great extent the processes of Dore's (1977) study. Seven general functions were identified for which Spanish was used by the children in school. These functions necessarily reflect both the structure and constraints of school life as well as the particularities of Spanish language usage of each child. Sub-categories have been defined within

several functions which denote usage of a particular subset of speech acts.

Spanish Language Functions

The six Spanish language functions identified are: Getting Work Done, Talking to Myself, Getting Along with Others, Talking About My World, Make Believe, and Conversational Devices. The details of each language function are described in the appendix. In this section, each function will be described in terms of the context in which it was generally found. The particular conditions of the interactions are also examined to better understand the variation in frequencies that were found. Within each function, examples are provided of children's talk which highlight their considerable abilities in the language.

Getting Work Done

A good deal of the children's time was spent talking about their school work. In fact, this function was the one used most by all five children. The majority of these conversations occurred in Mr. Gutierrez's class during Sustained Silent Writing, Spelling or other independent working activities. The following example, which occurred during a spelling activity between Julio Antonio and Jeanette, is typical of the way in which the children would request assistance of one another during independent work.

JA: OK, Jeanette, which one went after Jack 'O' Lantern?

JP: I'm still looking.

JA: *¿Donde lo buscas? ¿Acá?... ¿Dónde mero? ¿Acá?* (Where should I look? Here? Where exactly? Here?)

JP. *No. Donde está la boca.* (No. [Look] where the mouth is.)

JA: *Es que no los entiendo.* (I just don't understand them.)

In this instance, Julio Antonio was not just looking for the answer to the assignment but rather for an orientation about how and where to look for the solutions. Later, once he had figured one out, he offered assistance to Jeanette who had become confused.

JA: *Mira, mira, para que no digas, mira, OK, este número es thirteen, luego a este le pones fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen. Luego acá en el A, 'pérate, 'pérate, y luego aquí en el lado le pones fourteen. (Look, look so you won't say [I don't want to help you], this one is thirteen, then put fourteen on this one, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen. Then over here in the A, wai', wait, and over here on the side you put fourteen.)*

The fact that Julio Antonio code-switched into English when referring to numbers should not be construed here as an inability to count in Spanish. He clearly knew his numbers and was heard on several occasions to refer to numbers in a much higher range. More will be said about the children's code-switching later. It is important to note that the children had the ability in Spanish to orient themselves to an assignment and to search for solutions to that which was not yet understood. There were also instances in which the children used Spanish to talk about the content of the academic work itself, and gauge their progress. In the following example, Julio Antonio and AidJ were attempting to list as many countries as they could think of:

AA: *El Salvador, Ecuador, Argentina, Colombia, Bolivia, Chile, Alemania, Canadá, USA and México. ¿Cuáles tienes tú? (El Salvador, Ecuador, Argentina, Colombia, Chile, Germany.... Which ones do you have?)*

JA: *¿Eh? (Huh?)*

AA: *¿Tengo los Estados Unidos, Canadá, México, Salvador, Ecuador, Venezuela, Bolivia, Chile, Alemania... (I have the United States, Canada, Mexico, [El] Salvador, Ecuador, Venezuela, Bolivia, Chile, Germany...)*

JA: *¿Bolivia ... ¿cuál otro más? Este ...* (And Bolivia. Which other one, um...)

AA: *¿Perú?* (Peru?)

JA: *Perú.* (Peru.)

This give and take between AidJ and Julio Antonio displays considerable geographic knowledge on both their parts and serves to underscore their abilities to deal with more complex academic material in Spanish. In this particular instance, they had asked and were given permission to write their list in Spanish. During other assignments when children were permitted to write in Spanish, they again displayed the ability to conduct their academic life in Spanish.

Getting Along with Others

The children spent a great deal of time working out their relationships with one another. The first sub-category, Challenging Others, was used more frequently than Directing Others, or Being Friends. In part, the greater use of this sub-category, over the other two, may have been due to the fact that the data were collected during the fall semester as the children were getting to know each other. This sub-category involved questions of status among the focal children. An important aspect of getting acquainted was establishing the children's standing relative to others. The fact that it was, generally, those students who were new to South Alamo, that had a greater tendency to use this function, underscores its importance in the establishment of their friendships.

In the case of this function and its sub-categories, there was not as close a tie to particular events in the classroom, as there was with other functions. It could be used during an academically-based activity, during recess, or whenever there were opportunities for the children to talk. The following exchange between Cynthia and Lorena occurred during independent mathwork in Mr. Gutierrez's class and typifies these kinds of interactions. (The notation of "xxxx" denotes an utterance that was either unclear or not heard.)

CM: You were here since xxxx?

LG: Yes. (laughs) *Me estoy riendo de ti.* (I'm laughing at you.)

CM: *¿Por qué?* (Why?)

LG: *Por lo que me dijistes, ahorita de Nydia.* (Because of what you just told me about Nydia.)

CM: *Yo no dije nada. ¡No seas mentirosa!* (I didn't say anything. Don't be a liar!)

LG: (giggles) *Ah, ¿no te acuerdas lo que me dijiste, mensa? Seis, siete, ocho...* (Oh, you don't remember what you said to me, dummy? Six, seven, eight...)

CM: *Si yo no te dije nada.* (I didn't say anything.)

LG: (laughs) *Por eso te digo. No te acuerdas lo que me dijiste. Mírala. Mírala. Se hace la tonta. Cree que me hace tonta pero nó.* (That's why I'm telling you. You don't remember what you said to me. Look at her. Look at her. She's playing dumb. She thinks she's making me look dumb, but she's not.)

Throughout this short exchange, Lorena and Cynthia demonstrated their abilities to assert deny, explain, tease, insult and brag. Lorena, in particular, was able to intensify her insults of Cynthia by dealing with her in the third person, as if she were not present. Later in this same conversation, Lorena who was apparently having a very bad day, turned on Nydia and began criticizing her for copying the math answers from Lynn. Cynthia took advantage of this moment to needle Lorena further. Between the two of them, their conversation appears to be a lesson in the conjugation of the verb, *copiar*, to copy.

LG: *No, es que esa es bien copiona. A mi también me... cop'eaba.* (No, that one is a real copy-cat. She copied from me, too.)

CM: *Y, ¿no te gusta que copeen?* (And you don't like for them to copy from you?)

LG: *A mi nó. Que me copeen a mi, nó.* (No, I don't like for them to copy from me.)

CM: *¿Y a la otra gente?* (What about [copying] from others?)

LG: *¿Cómo?* (What do you mean?)

CM: *Como a Lynn.* (Like from Lynn.)

LG: *¿Qué quieres decir? No te entiendo.* (What are you trying to say? I don't understand you.)

CM: *Pues si no te gusta que te copeen a ti, entonces tampoco a Lynn.* (Well, if you don't like [people] to copy from you, then [they] shouldn't copy from Lynn either.)

LG: *A Lynn le gusta, yo le preguntaba que si, si le gusta que le copeen, por eso yo le copiaba yo. Pero ya no. Yo ya no le he copiado. Que a mi me cae muy mal la gente así* (Lynn likes it. I asked her if she liked it and that's why I copied from her. But no more. I don't copy anymore. Because I don't like people like that.)

CM: *¿Copiona?* (Copy-cat?)

LG: *Por eso yo ya no copio. Y sí copea ella.* (That's why I don't copy anymore. And she does.)

CM: *Al cabo que tu copiabas.* (Well, you used to copy.)

LG: *Yo copiaba, has dicho, COPIABA* (CM giggles and LG joins in.) *No copeo, copiaba. Copiaba, lo has dicho. Si yo quiero hacer algo en la vida, lo voy a hacer yo sola.* (I used to, you said it USED TO COPY. I don't copy, I used to. Used to copy as you say. If I want to do something in life, I'm going to do it myself.)

These types of exchanges did not generally become more acrimonious or aggressive. Their abilities to argue, discuss, insult, etc. allowed disputes to be won or lost at the verbal level. There were never any serious physical altercations among any of the focal children, or between the focal children and any of the other Mexicans. When there was serious misunderstanding, they generally stopped talking to each other. However, some of the focal children did get physical with those children who insulted them, especially when those insults were of an ethnic nature — “mojado,” “dirty Mexican,” etc.

Directing Others, the next sub-category of the Getting Along with Others function, was used less frequently than Challenging Others. However, its use was spread more evenly across all of the children. In the example below, AidJ demonstrated her ability to gossip about the way in which she had tricked Jeanette, by making a valentine with her name and that of one of the “marginal” boys.

AA: *No, le digo a Jeanette, y luego le digo, “Te voy a poner Jeff y JP”, y luego me dice, “Sí”, porque Jeanette también quiere a Jeff y entonces le pongo, eh le puse, JP, y luego le hice cross y luego le puse Stevie en vez de Jeff, y ya estábamos ¡ja, ja, ja !* (They both start to giggle.) Jeff.. no, no Stevie... *¡uaagh!* (No, I said to Jeanette, and so I told her “I’m going to put Jeff and JP” and so she said “yes” because she loves Jeff too and then I put, um I put JP and then I made a cross [plus sign] and then I put Stevie instead of Jeff and we were Ha, ha, ha... Jeff, no, no Stevie, yeach!)

CM: *To ‘avia lo tiene, ¿sabes?* (She still has it, you know.)

The sub-category Being Friends was used least of all by the group. For the most part, the children were embarrassed by complementary or “nice” comments from others. This seems typical of their age. A common strategy was to turn positive comments into jokes as the example below between AidJ, Jeanette and Lorena, demonstrates.

AA: *¡Mira nomás! ¡Qué piernotas tiene esta! ¡Tiene unas piernotas! ¡Por qué tienes piernotas?* (Wow! ... She’s got some legs! Some legs! How come you’ve got [those] legs?)

LG: *Préstamelo* (about a pen). (Lend it to me.)

JP: *¿Y cómo es que te estás fijando tú?* (And how come you noticed?)

LG: *Yeach, ¡cochina!* (They laugh.) (Yeah, dirty pig.)

In this instance, Jeanette was able to insinuate that AidJ's compliment came from sexual interest, thereby diverting attention from her legs and alleviating her embarrassment at being complimented. The fact that Lorena responded with humorous disgust, "Yeah, dirty pig," shows that Jeanette's subtlety was understood and appreciated. These kinds of indirect and subtle jokes could only be made or understood by those with considerable linguistic sophistication.

Talking About My World

The third most frequently-used function was Talking About My World in which the children commented on their lives outside of school. Like the Getting Along With Others function, this could be used during almost any event in which talking was allowed. Most of the time, the comments focused on their families, their neighborhood, or something they had seen in a store or on TV. In the example below, AidJ relates her trick or treating experience to a skeptical Cynthia.

AA: *Ove, como aver que fui a las houses, trick or treating. Ya pedimos trick or treating y salieron y eran dos hombres y yo no sabia Si eran mujeres O hombres.* (Hey, like yesterday when I went to the houses, trick or treating and two men came out and I didn't know if they women or men.)

CM: *Anda.* (Come on.)

AA: *Y luego este,... y luego andaban vestidos de mujeres y con medias y minifaldas y les digo, "Are you boys or girls?" Y (she laughs) se, se quitan la shamarra y le hacen, "girls" y se pusieron paper en las blouse así.* (All laugh.) (And then turn, and then they were dressed like women with stockings and miniskirts and I said,

"Are you boys or girls?" and they took off their jackets and they said 'girls' and they [had] put paper in their blouse like that.)

When AidJ began her narrative, Cynthia (her audience) was not sure whether to believe this story or not: 'come on.' As she continued, however, providing details about how they were dressed and their padded blouses, Cynthia's disbelief turned into laughter. AidJ demonstrated considerable comic ability in this example. Her code-switching at the end of her story, alternating Spanish with the word "paper" and "blouse" intensified the humor of her story, by highlighting the two words that were in a sense the "punch line". AidJ was able to manipulate her languages in order to accomplish the desired effect on her audience.

Talking to Myself

The fourth most frequently-used function was Talking to Myself. As in the case of Talking about My World and the sub-category, Challenging Others, there was great variation in frequencies. While talking to oneself can be viewed as an individual characteristic, it is interesting that the three most frequent users of this function, Julio Antonio, Lorena and AidJ, were also the three most successful students. Research in this cognitive strategy has pointed to the possibility that this "external" speech eventually becomes the internal schema for problem solving, once children reach a particular age (Cazden, 1976, 1982; Diaz, et al., 1986). The successful use of this strategy may have further assisted these children in their academic tasks.

Within this function, the speech act, Monitors Own Thinking and Speech, affords an interesting view of a cognitive strategy available to bilingual children (Diaz, Moll & Mehan, 1987). Once again, this strategy was used by Julio Antonio and AidJ and, to a much lesser extent, Lorena. It involved using both languages to solve a problem or to "move" the work along. The example below typifies this strategy. In this particular case, Julio Antonio sat with AidJ and Yolanda, Rodolfo and Jack during Sustained Silent Writing. Their assignment was to list as many countries as they could remember.

JA: *El Salvador, ¿El Ecuador?...Equator! How do you spell Equator?...Japan ... China, ¡Japón! ¡Japón! Which other one?...Spain.... ¡España!*

In this example, one can see Julio Antonio drawing on his own background knowledge of geography in Spanish and trying to utilize it to succeed in English. As it was, he and AidJ were given permission to write half of their list in Spanish, after checking with Mr. Gutierrez on its allowability. As has been stated before, the fact that the children had this knowledge in Spanish demonstrates that they were capable of carrying out complex academic tasks in Spanish.

Conversational Devices

The Conversational Devices function involved language "...used to establish, maintain or otherwise regulate conversations" (Dore, 1977, p. 146). This function was one of the least frequently used. In many cases, some utterances were nothing more than one word C "espera" or "toma" C when passing a paper, asking a question, etc. There were instances, however, in which the children demonstrated ample knowledge regarding courtesy in their own culture as the following examples show. Rather than demanding something of one another as often happens among children this age, they would frequently soften their voices, taking on an almost coaxing tone as if they were talking to a younger child, smiling and nodding their heads as they spoke and almost always achieving what they wanted.

AA: *Yolanda, Yolanda, ¿te puedes sentar en donde Ana, por favor? ¿Te puedes mover para acá? ¿Sí? ¿Por favor?* (Yolanda, Yolanda, can you sit where Ana is, please? Can you move over here? Will you? Please?)

LG: *Dame el tuyo, ¿sí? No, por favor, no lo avientes. Por favor, no seas egoista.* (Give me yours, will you? No, please, don't throw it. Please don't be selfish.)

Make Believe

The Make Believe function occurred most frequently during recess when the children were most free to play out something from their imagination. The bulk of these imaginary games were made up of the acting out of a soap opera entitled, *Munecos de Papel* (Paper Dolls) that appealed to many of the Mexicana girls. *Mujecos de Papel* was the story of some teen-aged girls who were rock singers and their trials and tribulations. Aide', Juana, Yolanda, and above all Cynthia, were avid fans of this show and liked to act out this show during recess. The game would usually start out with a bid for roles.

MP: *Yo, yo soy Erica.* (I'm, I'm Erica.)

CM: *¡No!* (very loud) *No, yo soy Jessica. Yo soy Jessica. ¡¡¡Yo soy Jessica!!!* (No, I'm Jessica. I'm Jessica. I'm Jessica!!)

MP: *Yo soy esta, ¿cómo se llama?* (I'm uh, what's her name?)

CM: *Marimar.*

MP: *Yo soy Silvana.* (I'm Silvana.)

AA: *Oye la que, que* (starts to sing) ... *quiere ser una estrella más, y xxxx brillar.* (Hey, the one that, that (sings) wants to be another star and shine.)

MP: *Yo soy Silvana.* (I'm Silvana.)

CM: *¡Ay! Esa me encantay es la que saliciayer.* (Oh, I love that one and it came out yesterday.)

AA: (Continues with her song.) *No digas que no puedes seguir. ¿Has intentado salir?* (Don't say you can't go on. Have you tried to get out?)

As this example demonstrates, the girls spent a great deal of time arguing about and bidding for roles. At the end of the recess hour, they

would generally end up singing one of the songs together, sometimes accompanying the song with a dance. However, this function was also used within the classroom, during those events where there was little teacher participation or intervention. Julio Antonio and Lorena would often sing a favorite song or act out a scene from the television or their home life, to the delight of their friends.

JA: (Singing.) *Me gusta la noche, me gusta la playa, me gusta la lluvia. Será que me amas. Amame, bésame, bésame. Así la hace Luis Miguel.* [He sings with the tremolo that characterizes this singer and whips his head around as he has seen the singer do. All the children laugh.] (I like the night, I like the beach, I like the rain. Perhaps you love me. Love me, kiss me, kiss me. That's how Luis Miguel does it.)

The children were great actors, imitating the style, the movements and even the accents of different television personalities and entertainers with ease. During these moments, the English-speaking children would frequently stop their own conversations and games to enjoy the performances as well. Like professional actors, the children tapped their dramatic and comedic talents using language to provide entertainment and release for themselves and their friends. These effects could not have been achieved had they not had a full and rich linguistic repository at their disposal.

As this description has demonstrated, it is clear that Spanish served specific functions in the school lives of the five focal children. These functions were not restricted to one or another aspect of the children's experiences, but ran the gamut of their daily lives in school C personal, social and academic. In addition, the children displayed considerable abilities to carry on their academic business in Spanish by orienting themselves to the tasks, thinking through their problems, and finding solutions.

In the social realm, the children showed abundant skill in maintaining their status with others by arguing, insulting, teasing, bragging, accusing and apologizing. They could also negotiate with each other, threaten one another and greatly enjoyed gossiping. Their abilities to joke were subtle and sophisticated. They all commented at length

about their lives outside of school, recreating all manner of experiences in detail, explaining the meaning of certain events and evaluating their effects. Their abilities as actors, performing and imitating were recognized by both Spanish and English speakers.

The frequency with which each of these functions has been used is tied to classroom structure, peer group membership and individual personalities. Overall, the majority of the functions were found mostly under the supervision of one of the teachers. In his lessons, most of the work was done individually at the students' seats and talking was allowed as they worked. This gave the children ample opportunities to talk about their work, their relationships and their home lives together. Only Make-Believe was tied mostly to recess where the children had enough time and freedom to really enter their imaginary worlds.

Three of the children were in the "high" reading and math groups which meant that they were together most of the day. This constant togetherness meant that they had many opportunities to talk with each other about school and other things. The other two students often sat with monolingual Spanish speakers, thus increasing the possibilities of Spanish talk. In addition, all five children interacted mostly with the other Mexicano children in the class. Spanish seems to have acted as a social cohesion for all of them, strengthening their identity and their place in the class.

Different patterns of use were revealed by the individual children. Work group assignments and group membership played a role in individual differences. In addition, individual interests and characteristics had an impact on the way in which Spanish was used. One child's constant self-talk, another's fascination with a soap opera, a third child's flirtatiousness all influenced the way in which each child used Spanish. But this in itself underscores another critical function of Spanish: the expression of individual personalities. Each one of them was able to speak about those aspects of their lives or their persons which were a part of their inner selves: music, humor, imagination and feelings. Spanish, then, was the vehicle for the construction of self.

From this short description, it can be seen that these children had considerable abilities in their first language. The fact that code-switching occurred in their conversations should not be construed as an inability to say those things in Spanish. Studies on code-switching

among children have revealed that in order for children to code-switch stylistically, they must have a highly-developed syntax in both languages (Genishi, 1981; McClure 1981). Analyses of the children's code-switching, which is not included here, underscored the children's competence in both languages.

Throughout the school day in the classroom, on the playground, and in the library the children were able to accomplish a variety of tasks and to fulfill their roles as peers, friends and students through the use of Spanish. This required them to use Spanish in varied and complex ways. These abilities were further strengthened and supported at home. However, the school also played an important role. And it is in this context where the interplay between the way in which the children influenced their environment and the way in which the environment influenced the children's language can be seen.

The peer group was critical for the children's Spanish, providing input and sustaining its use in a predominantly English environment. Further, the presence of monolingual Spanish speakers required the use of Spanish by the focal children, and others with whom they communicated. Additionally, the hostility that they experienced because they continued to use Spanish served to reinforce its use as a symbol of their ethnicity. Using Spanish then became one way to resist against the negative pressures aimed at them.

None of this would have been possible, however, had the teachers not tolerated Spanish language usage by students. Their understanding of the importance of Spanish in their students' lives gave the children the freedom to express themselves in whatever language they wished. Classroom structure also contributed to the way in which Spanish was used and the amount that was spoken by the children. Both teachers were interested in developing their students' abilities to work cooperatively. When the children were assigned group work, much of their talk was in Spanish. The large numbers of Spanish speakers in the two classes meant that in almost any combination at least two Spanish speakers were in the same group. Group work and individual seat work also gave the children some flexibility to seek each other out, thus reinforcing Spanish usage.

Each one of these elements helped to construct Spanish language usage in this classroom. By examining the purposes for which Spanish

was used, it becomes clear how the focal children contributed to the norms of language behavior in the classroom. Similarly, by studying bilingual children's conversations across speech events, and with a variety of interlocutors, their teachers' and classmates' contributions also became evident. Rather than searching for an unreliable ideal, this analysis of bilingual children's language in context provides for a systematic and realistic view of children's bilingualism (Grosjean, 1985; Mackey, 1972).

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Appendix

Spanish Language Functions

Each function is identified in bold print. Following the colon is the particular definition of that function. Within each function, speech acts are defined. These are identified by italics.

Getting Work Done: used for accomplishing the academically-related tasks and activities that are assigned or are a part of the responsibilities of children in school (for example, passing out and collecting papers and materials, straightening up the classroom, etc.).

Sub-Category: Getting Help - These are used for requesting any kind of assistance for the purpose of completing academic or other types of work. Within this sub-category are included both direct and indirect requests: "Can you help me?" and "What did you get for number three?", respectively. The speech acts listed in this sub-category are self-explanatory. Examples taken from the data are given after each speech act.

Speech Acts:

- *Request for Assistance:* "¿Me puedes ayudar?" "¿Qué tienes para el número tres?" (Can you help me? What did you get for number three?)
- *Request for Clarification:* "¿Esta es la palabra?" (Is this the word?)
- *Request for Information:* "¿Ahí estaba su papa?" (Was his dad there?)
- *Request for Confirmation:* "Los disfraces tienen que ser feos, ¿verdad?" (Your costumes have to be ugly, huh?)
- *Request for Interpretation:* "¿Qué quiere decir, 'You are welcome to join'?" What does "you are welcome to join" mean?)
- *Request for Action:* "¡Dame ese papel!" (Give me that paper!)

Sub-Category: Working Together - These are the statements, comments and other utterances which are made while working with peers that assist the accomplishment of the task. They are often responses to the requests listed above, but may be uttered without a preceding request.

Speech Acts:

- *(Provides) Assists:* Usually made after a request for assistance. An utterance that directly assists in a given activity or task, for example, "OK, este

numero es thirteen luego a este le pones fourteen..” (OK, this number is thirteen; then put number fourteen on this one.)

- *(Provides) Informs*: A statement or comment that provides information that is related to the accomplishment of a given activity or task, for example, “Ellos, de repente se hicieron pobres.” (They, [Russia] they all of a sudden became poor.)

- *(Provides) Confirms*: An utterance made in response to a request for confirmation, for example, “Sí se apaga solo.” (Yeah, it just turns off by itself.)

- *(Provides) Clarifies*: An utterance that assists in clarifying the procedures or tasks that are being undertaken. They are not always given upon a request, for example, “Ese es de Julio, no es mío.” (That’s Julio’s, not mine.)

- *(Provides) Interprets*: These utterances can be both an interpretation from one language to another, or a personal or given interpretation of some part or whole of an activity. For example, “Los tienes que poner en orden alfabético primero.” (You have to put them in alphabetical order first.)

- *Suggests Plan*: These are utterances in which the child suggests a plan for proceeding on a given task. For example, “Yo te doy el mío, y luego Cynthia te da el suyo.” (I’ll give you mine, then Cynthia will give you hers.)

- *Assessment of Work*: These are utterances that refer to either the quality or the quantity of work accomplished at a given point. For example, “Ya estoy en el treinta y ocho.” (I’m on [number] thirty-eight.)

Talking to Myself: Intrapersonal Language

Speech Acts:

- *Provides Plan*: An utterance that assists the child to plan his or her next step(s) in a given activity or task. For example, “Ay, yo nomás le voy a poner gitanos.” (Oh, I’m just gonna put ‘gypsies.’)

- *Self Assesses*: An utterance in which the child evaluates his or her own ability to do something or the quality of his or her own work. For example, “No me gusta cómo escribí esto.” (I don’t like the way I wrote this.)

- *Monitors Own Thinking or Speech*: These are utterances that assist the child to monitor him or herself as a given task progresses, or in thinking out a task or problem. They can often be heard as incomplete sentences or ‘snatches’ of self-talk. For example, in counting out the number of words one has been able to find, “One, two, three...” or “Oh, what else?” They can also consist of repetitions of what has been said or written already. For example, “Bolivia... Ecuador ... mm.” (Barnes & Todd, 1977). In a few instances, the children employed both languages as a strategy for solving problems or for ‘moving’ the work along. Typically the child would begin in one language, move to the other, and then sometimes back

again in an attempt to complete a given task. In some instances, the child would suddenly 'discover' new material or the solution to the problem. For example, "Japan, China ... ¡Japón! ¡Japón!... Spain.... ¡España!"

- *Reports Internal State*: These are utterances which the child says to him or herself which refer to the internal state and feelings of the child (Dore, 1977). For example, "¡Ay, hombre! ¡Traigo huevonada!" (Oh man, I feel so lazy!)

- *Performs*: The only instances in which the child is reading out loud to him or herself.

Getting Along with Others: used to establish and maintain social relations among class members. Three sub-categories are subsumed within this function.

Sub-Category: Challenging Others - Utterances that involve attempts to raise the status of one child vis-a-vis another or others. These are accomplished through the speech acts found below:

Speech Acts:

- *Asserts*: A statement of opinion or purported fact, often an essential part of a dispute (Brenneis & Lein, 1977). For example, "No soy niñita, soy señorita." (I'm not a little girl. I'm a young lady.)

- *Displays*: These were utterances in which the children displayed either a material item or shared an anecdote which elevated their status in some way. For example: "Mira lo que me puso Ms. Chávez." (Look what Ms. Chávez wrote in my journal.)

- *Teases*: Utterances which called into question the abilities or personality traits of an individual, but in a softened joking manner. For example, "¡Estás loco!" (You're crazy!)

- *Insults*: Utterances which insult the abilities or personality traits or family members of an individual. At times they may be similar in content to teases, but they are said in an aggressive manner. For example: "¡Mendigo joto!" (You begging queer!)

- *Questions*: Utterances which question the propositions that another has endorsed (Labov & Fanshel, 19, p.64). For example, in response to a child who has declared that she will not copy, "¿No acabas de copiarle en math?" (Didn't you just copy [from her] in math?)

- *Accuses*: Utterances which accuse another of some undesirable action. For example, "¡Le estás copiando los answers de Lynn!" (You're copying the answers from Lynn!)

- *Demands for Explanation:* Utterances which request an explanation, often from an opponent (Brenneis & Lein, 1977, p.53) “¿Por que le estás dando tu teléfono?” (How come you’re giving your phone number?)

- *Denies:* Utterances which are commonly in response to an accusation. For example, “¡Yo no dije nada!” (I didn’t say anything.)

- *Protests:* Utterances in which the child protests another’s actions. “¡Mira lo que está haciendo!” (Look what he’s doing!)

- *Refuses:* Utterances in which the child refuses to comply with a request or go along as intended by others. For example, upon hearing a proposed plan, “¡Ay, cállate!” (Oh, be quiet!)

- *Contradictory Assertions:* An utterance that is in direct contradiction to a preceding assertion, but which is not simply a negative statement (Brenneis & Lein, 1977, p.52). For example:

Child 1: “¡Menso!” (You dummy!)

Child 2: “¡Tú eres el menso!” (You’re the dummy!)

- *Supportive Assertions:* Statements presenting evidence in support of an argument” (Brenneis & Lein, 1977, p.53). For example, in an argument about the correct answer to a question, “No soy tonto, sabes.” (I’m not stupid, you know.)

- *Placates:* Utterances which are meant to placate or appease. For example, after teasing someone, “No te creas.” (Just kidding.)

- *Apologizes:* Utterances in which a child directly apologizes to another. For example, “Lo siento.” (I’m sorry.)

Sub-Category: Directing Others - Language used to regulate and influence the behavior of others. Similar to Halliday’s regulatory function (Halliday, 1973).

Speech Acts:

- *Corrects:* Utterances which are meant to correct the language or behavior of others. For example, “No tienes que decir, ‘con éstos.’” (You shouldn’t say ‘these’ [to refer to these people].)

- *Gossips:* Utterances which refer to actions of or experiences with a third party or parties. “¿Sabe, ésta le tiene celos a Aidé? Porque todos los chavalos andan atrás de ella.” (You know what? She’s jealous of [her] because all the boys like her.)

- *Tattles:* Utterances which report the actions of a third party or parties to someone with greater status or power than the individual speaking. For example, in speaking to a teacher, “No quiere cambiar conmigo.” (He won’t trade [papers] with me.)

- *Alerts*: Utterances which alert another of something they may not be aware of e.g., being called by another, possible trouble, etc. For example, “Oye, te habla el maestro.” (Hey, the teacher’s calling you.)

- *Negotiates*: Utterances in which the child attempts to negotiate the outcome of a given situation, without confronting the other about it. For example, “A ver. Escojan un numero de . . uno a diez.” (Let’s see. Choose a number between.. .one and ten.)

- *Reports*: Utterances in which the child recounts a personal experience or action. The difference between this and gossip is that in reports, the child him or herself is the focus, while in gossip it is someone else. “Dijo, que estos eran para los otros...para que no se pusieran celosos.” (She said these were for the other so they wouldn’t get jealous.)

- *Threats*: Utterances in which the child threatens another with some future action. For example, “¡Cállate Juana, o te voy a dar unas cachetadas!” (Shut up, Juana, or I’ll slap you!)

Sub-Category: Being Friends - Language used for establishing or maintaining positive relations with others.

Speech Acts:

- *Compliments*: Utterances in which one child compliments another. For example, “Mira nomas. “¡Qué piernotas tiene!” (Wow, look at the legs she’s got!)

- *Jokes*: Utterances which are funny and/or are meant to amuse others. For example:

Child 1: “Si, yo quiero una con nueces.” (I want [a cookie] with nuts.)

Child 2: “Mientras yo quiero espinillas.” (Yeah, and I want pimples.)

- *Flirts*: Utterances whether serious or funny which serve to promote or maintain romantic ties between boys and girls. For example, from one girl to a boy (she has confessed to like.) “Oye, Jeff ¿verdad que quieres verlo?” (Hey, Jeff don’t you wanna see this [a note with hearts on it]?)

- *Requests for Attention*: These are utterances that are used to request or call attention to the speaker. For example, “¡Jeanette, mira!” (Jeanette, look!)

- *Requests for Reports of Internal State*: Utterances in which a child requests that another speak of their feeling. For example, “¿Por que andas enojada hoy?” (Why are you angry today?)

Talking About my World: Used to express propositions about the processes, persons, objects, states and relations out in the real world. This function is similar to Halliday’s Representational function (Halliday, 1975).

Speech Acts:

- *Narrates:* A group of utterances which form a narrative about an experience the child has had or heard of; outside of the world of school. For example, "Uy, ayer andaba corroteando a mi hermana, la tonta, y estaba esta silla, porque siempre la sacamos y..." (Ooh, yesterday, I was chasing my dumb little sister, outside and there was this chair, 'cuz we take it out of the house and....)
- *Interprets:* Utterances in which the child provides his or her own interpretation of an occurrence, fact, experience, etc. "Solo, solo las blancas son de ella." (Only, only the white ones are hers.)
- *Explains:* The child provides an explanation of an occurrence, experience, fact, relationship. For example, in talking about the cold weather, "Aquí cuando está frío, y le hace uno así, se le ve todo amarillo." (When it's cold here, and you do this [hit the tetherball], it gets all yellow here [on your hand]).
- *Clarifies:* An utterance that assists in clarifying given propositions about the real world. For example, "Mi prima menor, Claudia." (My younger cousin, Claudia.)
- *Demonstrates:* Utterances which assist in demonstrating an action, activity, game, etc. For example, "Deshazlo, deshazlo, así mira," (Undo it, undo it, like this.)
- *Describes:* Utterances which describe an action, person, object or process. For example, "Vi muchas chavalas, con globos, vestidas de uvas y manzanas... así." (I saw many girls with balloons, dressed like grapes and apples. ..like that.)
- *Attributes:* Utterances which express beliefs about another's abilities, internal states, intentions, etc. (Dore, 1977, p.146). "No puede ver las letras." (He can't see the letters.)
- *Refers:* Utterances which make reference to a previously-mentioned proposition or one which is of common knowledge. For example, "¿Te acuerdas, de ese, ese puzzle que hicimos?" (Remember that, that puzzle we did?)
- *Evaluates:* Utterances in which the child provides his or her evaluation of some object, process, person. "Me encantan Los Tigres del Norte." (I love Los Tigres del Norte.)
- *Internal Reports:* These are utterances which refer to the internal state and feelings of the child (Dore, 1977). For example, "Tengo frío." (I'm cold.)

Make Believe: Language used to explore the child's or a shared imaginary world.

Speech Acts:

- *Invites to Imagine:* These are utterances in which the child invites another to join him or her in an imaginary world. For example, “Vamos a jugar Muñecos de Papel.” (Let’s play Paper Dolls.)
- *Bids for Role:* Utterances in which the child bids for a turn or role in a (imaginary) game. “¡Yo quiero ser Jessica!” (I want to be Jessica!)
- *(Suggests) Rules:* Utterances in which rules are either stated or suggested for a game. “Tu novio será Jorge.” (Your boyfriend will be George.)
- *Narrates:* A group of utterances which form a narrative about a game or an imaginary world. For example, “Y luego me encontré un collar de cristales y luego me fui hasta abajo en el mar y me hallé otro.” (And then I found a big necklace of crystals and then I went under the sea and found another one.)
- *Role Plays:* Utterances which assist a child to play the part of a real or imaginary character or person. For example, mimicking the voice and mannerisms of a younger sibling, “¡Ay! ¿qué te pasó, Shapito?” (Oh, what happened to you, Shrimpy?)
- *Performs:* Utterances in which a child performs as him or herself. Most common in this speech act is singing.
- *Request for Performance:* Utterances in which one child requests that another perform. For example, “Cántamela, para ver cómo va.” (Sing it for me so I can see how it goes.)
- *Request for Action:* Utterances in which a child requests action of another. For example, “Vamos a seguir jugando.” (Let’s keep playing.)

Conversational Devices: “Language that is used to establish, maintain or otherwise regulate...conversations.” (Dore, 1977, p.146).

Speech Acts:

- *Initiates:* Utterances that initiate or attempt to initiate conversation. For example, “¿Qué andas haciendo?” (What are you doing?)
- *Responds:* Utterances which serve as a response to another’s move.
- *Delays:* Utterances which delay the need for a particular response. For example, “Pérate.” (Wait.)
- *Bids for Turn:* Utterances which serve as a bid for speaking. These are often single words or fragments, particularly when the bid is not successful. For example, “Sabes, mi hermano...” (You know, my brother...)
- *Supports:* Utterances which show that the child is attending to another and supports the continuation of the exchange. These are often single words or sounds which show such support. For example, “Mm...hm” or “si.” (Yes.)

- *Accompanies*: Utterances which “signal closer contact by accompanying a speaker’s actions” (Dore, 1977, p 146). For example, “Toma, Julio”. (Here, Julio.)

- *Redirects*: An utterance which either redirects the topic of conversation or points the participants to another topic or action. “Pues Si, me dieron ganas de llorar... ¿Donde está ese lápiz?” (Yeah, well I just felt like crying ... Where is that pencil?)

- *Interrupts*: Utterances which are spoken out of turn before another has finished. These often consist of one word or a fragment because the interruption may be ignored by others.

- *Politeness Markers*: Utterances in which there are explicit markers of politeness (Dore, 1977, p.146). For example, “Por favor” or “Con permiso.” (Please or Excuse me.)